



**For Immediate Release**

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**Media Contact**

Jessie Greene

[jessie.greene@tn.gov](mailto:jessie.greene@tn.gov)

615-519-7730

## **Tennessee Celebrates 10 Years of VETS Act Supporting Military-Connected Students**

**Nashville, TN** – April 4, 2024 – Today marks the ten-year anniversary of the Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act, which was signed into law on April 4, 2014. The VETS Act provides veterans with statewide support that aids them in transitioning from military service to enrollment at a higher education institution. Notably, since 2019, veterans at VETS Campuses have earned approximately 8,700 credentials.

Over the decade, the act has expanded its reach to include all military-connected students pursuing higher education, emphasizing the state's commitment to supporting all students connected to military service.

With an estimated 140,000 veterans in Tennessee without college credentials, the need for comprehensive support remains critical. Spearheaded by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the VETS Act ensures military-connected students receive essential resources and support for academic success in college. This includes granting in-state tuition to those with veterans' education benefits and encouraging institutions to enhance readiness and support for this student group.

Currently, 39 campuses in Tennessee hold the prestigious designation of VETS Campuses, showcasing their commitment to being military-friendly and providing tailored support for military-connected students. Those supports include developing student peer mentorships first-year studies programs, training for faculty and staff on military culture and mental health awareness, and partnerships with local veterans' resources.

"We're immensely proud of our student veterans across the state, whose dedication and achievements exemplify resilience and commitment," said Steven Gentile, Executive Director of THEC. "Additionally, we're excited about the General Assembly and Governor Lee's introduction of the advanced tier of the VETS Act, offering new opportunities for institutions to further support our military-connected students on their academic journey."

Last week, on March 27, 2024, Governor Lee signed VETS Bravo, sponsored by Representative John Regan and Senator Bill Powers, into law, expanding the VETS Act's provisions. VETS Bravo challenges current VETS Campuses to enhance data collection efforts, promote the evaluation of military experience for college credit, and provide career placement services tailored to student veterans.

As Tennessee reflects on the past decade of the VETS Act's impact, THEC reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting military-connected students, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to achieve their educational goals and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

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The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission develops, implements, evaluates postsecondary education policies and programs in Tennessee while coordinating the state's systems of higher education, and is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.